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News Release

September 22, 2005

Additional Sediment Sampling Data Released

Biological and chemical data from sediment samples collected in New Orleans are now available. EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) collected the chemical data September 10, 11 and 12. Biological data is available for Sept. 10.

Direct frequent contact with sediments containing petroleum hydrocarbons/fuel oils and E.coli at the levels detected in the samples may cause adverse health effects. The levels of other chemical contaminants detected in sediment are not expected to result in adverse health effects. EPA recommends avoiding all contact with sediment deposited by the flood water, where possible.

The sediment sampled consists of residuals deposited by receding floodwaters, which may include historical sediment from nearby bodies of water, soil from yards, yard and construction debris, and other material.

E. coli was detected in 11 of the 21 samples, which implies presence of fecal bacteria. While no standards exist for determining human health risks from E. coli in soil or sediment, people should avoid contact with sediment in the area. If contact occurs, EPA and the Centers for Disease Control strongly advise the removal of contaminated clothing and the use of soap and water, if available, to clean the exposed areas.

If contact with fuel oil occurs, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends washing with soap and water, flushing of the eyes, removal of contaminated clothing, and immediate medical attention if ingestion of fuel oil contaminated media occurs. Additional information concerning fuel oils may be found on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Agency's ToxFAQs for fuel oils:

<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts75.html>

Data from the September 10 samples are available on EPA's web site at

<http://www.epa.gov/katrina/testresults/sediments/index.html>

For additional information on EPA's response to Hurricane Katrina, go to: <http://www.epa.gov/region6>.

For information on LDEQ's response to Hurricane Katrina, go to: <http://www.deq.state.la.us/>.